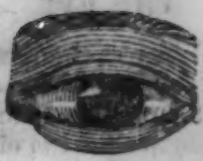
THE  EYE:

BY OBADIAH OPTIC.

——VARIOUS OBJECTS FROM THE SENSE,
VARIOUSLY REPRESENTING. MILTON.

Vol. I.] THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1808. [No. I.

TO THE PUBLIC.

WITH the first number of a new periodical publication, an introductory address is expected, detailing the objects in view and the plan on which it is to be conducted: The Editor of the 'EYE,' though he wishes to avoid the beaten track of extensive promises, yet for the satisfaction of those who may patronize his undertaking, conceives it his duty to state, that it shall ever be his aim to discountenance vice by the diffusion of moral principles, to promote a taste for polite literature, to disseminate useful knowledge, and to foster native genius.

And here, perhaps, the curious enquirer may, from the peculiarity of the Editor's choice of a title, be induced to expect from him an elaborate disquisition on the properties of the EYE; this he deems unnecessary, its utility being obvious to every person endowed with sight; the views which attract it are infinitely diversified.....the vast extent which it surveys is astonishing.....it glances from earth to the planetary system and wanders through expansive æther to the bright luminary of day ....it follows the blazing comet in its mysterious course, and returning to its native globe, swift as light, examines every object within the reach of its extensive powers. Its utility is indeed so great, that to attempt a definition would be to degrade its merits; suffice it to say, the Editor intends to convey through the 'EYE' to the mind, such ideas as may be useful; it shall never be shut to any subject that may have a tendency to improve the understanding; and should it look at the vices of mankind, it will discover their deformities and

notice them in such manner as circumstances may render necessary.....from subjects of religious and political controversy it shall ever be averted, but on the luxuriant fields of genius it will ever look with delight: the sun of science will strengthen its powers....in the cause of virtue it shall ever be animated....with pleasure will it sparkle at the prospect of human happiness, whilst it will never disdain to drop a tear of commisseration on the bosom of distress. O. OPTIC.

CURIOUS HISTORICAL FACTS.

IT is to the luxury of the old Romans that we owe many of the delicacies that now abound. Lucullus, when he returned from the Mithridatick war, introduced cherries the first time into Italy, from Cerasus, a city near Sinope, on the Euxine sea. There were also brought into Italy, about this period, many other curiosities of fruit, flowers and plants, from Greece, Asia and Africa; apricots from Epirus, peaches from Persia, the finest sorts of plumbs from Damascus and Armenia, pears and figs from Greece and Egypt, citrons from Media, and pomegranates from Carthage. All these were soon brought to perfection in Italy.

IT is somewhat remarkable, that Queen Elizabeth was the first person in England who wore silk stockings. They were presented to her by a Mrs. Montague; and thenceforth, says Dr. Howell, she never wore cloth ones any more. The art of knitting silk stockings by wires or needles was first practised in Spain; and twenty eight years after it had been imported into England, Mr. Lee of Cambridge, invented the engine or steel loom, called the stocking frame, by means of which, England was enabled to export great quantities of silk stockings to Italy and other parts. Mr. Lee taught his art in England and France, and his servents did the same in Spain, Venice and Ireland.

THE use of coaches was introduced into England by Fitz Alan, Earl of Arundel, A. D. 1580. At first, they were drawn by two horses only. It was Buckingham, the favourite, who (about 1619) began to have them drawn by six horses which, as an historian says, "was wondered at as an novelty, and imputed to him as a mastering pride." Before that time, ladies chiefly rode on horseback, either single, on their palfreys, or double behind some person, on a pillion.

ORIGINAL.

THE AMERICAN IDLER.—No. I.

Thenceforth to speculations high or low
I turn'd my thoughts. MILTON.

THIS world of ours is the abode of so many visionary beings, who form literary plans that are never executed, and execute plans that had as well never have been conceived, that most beginnings, like the present, are viewed either with indifference or disgust, or if they excite a partial interest in the public eye, that interest soon ceases, and the author is left to pursue his career, which he soon finds is leading him by an easy undisturbed path to the vale of oblivion.

Whether or not this will be my fate, is a question which those may decide, who think it of sufficient consequence to create a discussion, and while they are forming opinions, and framing arguments for and against me, I will proceed to give some account of my feelings, views and intentions concerning this work; and if the reader concludes that I am a character similar to those hinted at above, he will, in all probability, form quite as correct an estimate of me as I deserve.

When I first determined to write a series of essays, I viewed myself with an extraordinary degree of self-complacency. Sure thought I, to amuse the leisure hours of the good, to reform the bad, and to render the careless more circumspect, are aims worth aspiring after, and ends worth attaining. Life is short at best, and with many but "like the baseless fabric of a vision which leaves not a wreck behind." The great majority of mankind are not known out of a small circle of acquaintance, and in that not remarkable for great virtues, good actions, or uncommon talents. They pass away and are forgotten, because they leave no worthy memorials behind them to keep their names alive, and render them dear and honourable. I wish to avert a like fate, I wish to be useful, and to effect these purposes will endeavour to deserve by my lubrications the applause of the wise and virtuous.

Such were the reveries of a heated imagination, such the "airy nothings" to which I expected to give "a local habitation and a name," but which one moment of sober thought dissolved. It was not the difficulty of the undertaking, but the difficulty of succeeding in it, that appalled me. The number of men of genius is small, and the number of those who write with effect, still less; they appear "like angel visits, few and far between." To such a title I make no pretensions, how then shall I succeed, and indeed where shall we find a worthy successor of the amiable ADDISON, the insinuating HAWKESWORTH, or the sublime JOHNSON? where the wit and sentiment of STERNE, or the humour of THORNTON?

But I long since came to a resolution *never to despair*, though surrounded by difficulties; and never to relax exertion, while there was a prospect of success. I therefore determined to proceed though not so certain of being useful as at first, and though I shall discover many errors, and be obnoxious to much censure, it is "*devoutly to be wished*" that I may not be found so entirely destitute of good qualities as the cities of Sodom and Gomorah were of good men! If ten virtuous could have saved them, a less number of good qualities, it is to be hoped, will insure my safety.

But after all, I know not many reasons that could be brought to induce the reader to view my productions with an eye of tenderness, or arguments that could be used to conciliate his affection. In every work, the writer's end should be regarded, and if it is an attempt to be any way useful to mankind, it deserves some praise, even though it should fail of success. Fame, I long since determined, should never influence me in writing, for I knew that such an expectation would far more often than otherwise, prove to be only the foundation on which I should build a superstructure of disappointment and bitterness of heart. And indeed, such a thought never occurs to me without bringing to recollection, the pathetic exclamation of BEATTIE in the commencement of the "*Minstrel*,"

> Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
> The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar!

the force of which, however, may be greatly lessened, by recurring to the following lines from YOUNG, which I think

might tend greatly to reconcile each of her disappointed votaries "to the defeat of their hopes, and the miscarriage of their expectations,"

> Fame is the shade of immortality,
> And in itself a shadow. Soon as caught
> Contemn'd; it shrinks to nothing in the grasp.
> Consult the ambitious, 'tis ambition's cure.

Idleness is a trait in the human character, which attaches to all in a greater or lesser degree. To me it may with justice be applied. I have wasted or ill employed much of the time which has passed away since I was ushered into existence, and that which is to come may be no better spent. My essays will doubtless often bear evident marks of *idleness* and inattention; they may be found to be neither correct nor elegant in style, nor original in expression. Here will be discovered the propriety with which I write under the title of "THE IDLER," a title before used by one dear to every friend of genius, and every admirer of virtue. This was DR. JOHNSON; his essays do not however correspond with the name he has given them, for they savour no more of idleness, and its concomitant carelessness, than the essays of LOCKE, or the poetry of DARWIN. JOHNSON never wrote like and *idler*; indeed, when he felt *idle*, he did not write at all, for one of his biographers informs us, that a person (whose name I do not recollect) went to see him at his lodgings, intending from thence to send a letter into town, but found him an *author by profession*, destitute of pen, ink and paper!

What will be the contents of the succeeding papers, now remains to be stated,—and this, gentle reader, I can scarcely inform thee. Whim and caprice so tyrannically rule over some men, that it is difficult to say one day, what may be their conduct the next. According to my present ideas, I shall, at one time, attempt a disquisition on morality, at another, on topics of polite literature, now try to portray "*the manners living as they rise*," and now to draw the characters of my cotemporaries, who are remarkable for their virtues, or their vices, their wisdom, or their folly. A long time has elapsed, and days, years and months must silently depart, before men will arrive at that state of perfection, which visionists have prophesied, and enthusiasts believed. Sufficient matter will then each day unfold itself for speculation, and if I can, with

liberality and candour, speak of those frailties to which we are all liable, if I can influence any to view with pity

——————— The erring throng,
Applaud the right, forgive the wrong,
And feel for all mankind,

I shall be satisfied; and not only satisfied, but like the stars in the firmament, run my course rejoicing. J.

ORIGINAL.

THE SPECTACLES.—No. I.

Be wise to day; 'tis madness to defer;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead;
Thus on; till wisdom is push'd out of life;
Procrastination is the thief of time. YOUNG.

IDLENESS is the most infatuating and destructive of vices, its deformity is too much lost in its universality: those who practise it are so prejudiced, that they not only extol its forbidden sweets, but affect to despise those who do not participate in the enjoyment. The intemperate will be repulsed, but the idle man courted; all delight in censuring other and less vices, but idleness is not despised though its prevalency calls for the most decided invectives of every friend to virtue.

There is no moment of our lives which may not be employed to advantage, yet we sacrifice day after day, forgetting the past, and disregarding the future; we are too apt to neglect opportunities for improvement; and our time, the precious loan from the Deity, is passed as if it were given only for our consideration how to misspend it. Many complain of irksome hours, because they are ignorant of the means of passing them profitably; they anticipate the arrival of pleasure, and hurry over the interval with the impetuosity of folly, or the tediousness of impatience; they have chosen no occupation for leisure, and the absence of amusement is an almost insupportable burden.

The incontrovertible maxim, "chuse that course of life which is most useful, and custom will make it the most agree-

able," is seldom enforced; if we cannot find something at first view gratifying, we hasten to objects more prepossessing in appearance; we expect the path of science strewed with roses divested of thorns, and wait to be borne, without any exertion on our part, to the delightful chambers of literature. A small impediment to general information is considered as an insurmountable obstacle, the mind rashly converts seeming obstructions into insuperable difficulties, and concedes the victory to imaginary foes, without engaging in the contest.

There is no one, except deprived of ordinary faculties, excusable for ignorance, no palliation will justify a want of knowledge in the common branches of literature; those other engagements that require all their time, so frequently urged by men of business, is a frivolous and ineffectual plea, how many hours more than nature demands, are devoted to sleep, and how often is *time taken* for trifling amusements, by these very characters? There is nothing requires less time than the attainment of knowledge; the quantity read is of little importance, the manner of reading is the great mean of improvement. Science extends her bounteous hand to all, and those who cannot imbibe largely, may, by repeated sips, exhaust the cup.

It is too generally thought, that knowledge may be obtained at any time, and therefore the passing moment is slighted: the insidious syren, Delay, is suffered to delude the mind, and lull it into inaction. We postpone instruction, but eagerly grasp at pleasure, and by our own inconsiderateness, throw more difficulties in our way: The transition from ignorance is as a road at first plain and beaten, the walk refreshing and pleasing; if untrodden for some time, unpleasant and difficult of discernment; but in a short time it is not distinguishable from the wilderness through which it was laid out; the traveller bewildered in attempting to discover it, retires fatigued and perplexed, lamenting too late his folly in not having sought before time had rendered it impervious.

It is not the lounger only, who answers to the description of idler, there are some who devote part of their time to study, that they may *appear* informed; the opinion of the world is all their object, and they assiduously court it; they read to report what they have read, and vainly aspire at being thought the teachers of others; they strive for universal knowledge at once, and only acquire superficial endowments; they hur-

ry from one writer to another, scarcely knowing the subject on which they treat, and pause only to remember those things which serve for useless ostentation; these, as a humorous writer observes, "treat books as they do great personages, become acquainted with their names and titles, and then boast of their acquaintance."

Many innocently run over pages without reading them, with their eyes riveted on a book and their hands instinctively turning over leaves, their minds are occupied in renewing past and exaggerating future pleasures, and from a want of resolution, they are driven to an injurious absence of mind and criminal waste of time. Nearly allied to these is a set of weak minded persons, who suffer their imaginations to haunt them with fanciful ideas, and erect "airy castles" while they demolish a structure of literature. Others, although they read with proper attention, derive but little profit from their labour, they attend to what they peruse only while the book is before them, and by neglecting to reflect on, or recapitulate what they have acquired, their study serves little more than to divert them from more injurious pursuits, which though great in itself, is not a sufficient compensation for their laudable employment. Some are idle because they suppose their information sufficiently extensive, or because their vanity inspires them with a belief of their superiority over others; but these are always liable to be amended by some public and mortifying stroke to their folly.

Idleness has many friends, but none dare advocate it, all secretly condemn it in others, but encourage it when connected with themselves: fearful lest their lives should be cited in opposition to what they advance, they forbear from openly inveighing against it, and thus it has enabled itself, when accompanied with a handsome appearance and graceful address to become a substitute for merit, and a sure introduction to favour. It has been emphatically styled, The root of all evil; and until it is by every one treated with contempt, and ignorance uniformly despised, society will be deprived of a large portion of its privileged happiness.

"Let the females of a country be virtuous," said a philosopher, "and they will form the manners and characters of that country," it chiefly then belongs to them to effect this important and glorious reformation; it is their province to excite an honourable emulation among our youths, and by first setting

the example, despising comeliness when unaccompanied with merit, and frowning at ignorance though clothed with the specious garb of flattery, the task is easily accomplished.

THE BIRTH OF PITY.

IN the happy period of the golden age, when all the celestial inhabitants descended to the earth, and conversed familiarly with mortals, among the most cherished of the heavenly powers were twins, the offspring of Jupiter, *Love* and *Joy*. Wherever they appeared, the flowers sprung up beneath their feet, the sun shone with a brighter radiance, and all nature seemed embellished by their presence. They were inseparable companions, and their growing attachment was favoured by Jupiter, who had decreed that a lasting union should be solemnized between them so soon as they were arrived at maturer years. But in the mean time the sons of men deviated from their native innocence; vice and ruin over-ran the earth with giant strides; and Astrea, with her train of celestial visitants, forsook their polluted abodes. Love alone remained, having been stolen away by Hope, who was his nurse, and conveyed by her to the forests of Arcadia, where he was brought up among the shepherds. But Jupiter assigned him a different partner, and commanded him to espouse *Sorrow*, the daughter of Até. He complied with reluctance; for her features were harsh and disagreeable, her eyes sunk, her forehead contracted into perpetual wrinkles, and her temples were covered with a wreath of cypress and wormwood. From this union sprung a virgin, in whom might be traced a strong resemblance to both her parents; but the sullen and unamiable features of her mother were so mixed and blended with the sweetness of her father, that her countenance, though mournful, was highly pleasing. The maids and shepherds of the neighbouring plains gathered round, and called her *Pity*. A red-breast was observed to build in the cabin where she was born: and while she was yet an infant, a dove pursued by a hawk, flew into her bosom. This nymph had a dejected appearance, but so soft and gentle a mien, that she was beloved to a degree of enthusiasm. Her voice was low and plaintive but inexpressibly sweet; and she loved to lie for hours together on the banks of some wild and melancholy stream, singing to her lute. She taught men to weep, for she took a strange delight in tears; and often, when the virgins of the hamlet

were assembled at their evening sports, she would steal in amongst them, and captivate their hearts by her tales full of a charming sadness. She wore on her head a garland composed of her father's myrtles twisted with her mother's cypress.

One day, as she sat musing by the waters of Helicon, her tears by chance fell into the fountain; and ever since, the Muses' spring has retained a strong taste of the infusion. Pity was commanded by Jupiter to follow the steps of her mother through the world, dropping balm into the wounds she made, and binding up the hearts she had broken. She follows with her hair loose, her bosom bare and throbbing, her garments torn by the briars, and her feet bleeding with the roughness of the path. The nymph is mortal, for her mother is so, and when she has fulfilled her destined course upon the earth, they shall both expire together, and *Love* be again united to *Joy*, his immortal and long-betrothed bride.

TRIFLES.

A PERSON reading a paragraph in the paper, that a large piece of land had been *washed away* by an inundation, but that the account was not fully confirmed; was stopped short by a gentleman, who observed "that if it was even true, there was no *ground* for the report."

CHASTEL, a disciple of the Jesuits, attempting to assassinate Henry IV. missed of the fatal aim, and only wounded the Monarch in his mouth. Well (said the amiable King) I have often heard from the *mouth* of others that the Jesuits were my enemies, I am now convinced of it by my *own*.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"*The American Idler*"—A literary *Bee*, ever welcome to our hive.

"*The Spectacles*"—We trust will aid the sight in discovering many useful objects to those who may look thro' them.

"*Honest Robert the Patriot*"—A pleasing picture from life—Patriotism exemplified, an agreeable subject for 'the Eye.'

"*She who would gain*, &c. and "*Affection's Smile*"—shall appear in our next.

The literary favours received by the Editor, at so early a period of this publication, entitle the contributors to his sincere acknowledgments; were he to omit this opportunity of tendering them his thanks, his ingratitude would be discovered by every discerning eye: and whilst grateful to such as have already manifested their desire to promote the usefulness of his paper, he is encouraged to hope many others will afford their aid.

Poetical Department.

ORIGINAL.

HONEST ROBERT THE PATRIOT.

AT the foot of yon hill, mark that mansion so gray,
How tranquil! how neat it appears,
There dwells honest Robert, past times are away,
He bends with the weight of his years;
Yet once in his time, he well knew how to wield
His sword, and stood first in the embattled field,
To Britain, proud Britain, disdaining to yield
When WASHINGTON held the command.

Honest Robert was brave, and on Lexington's plains
Shew'd courage and conduct, and gain'd much renown;
But quoth he, as long as an en'my remains,
The arms of young Robert shall ne'er be laid down.
So, true to his word to America true,
No thought ever rose but the thought to subdue:
No toil he thought hard, no respite he knew
'Till the foe was expell'd from our land.

Then brave honest Robert return'd to the town,
Where first his eyes open'd on day,
To recount to his parents the deeds he had done,
And the foes he had slain whilst away;—
But alas! in the grave his old parents were laid,
The house stood alone deep immur'd in the shade,
The rank weeds grew strong through his favourite glade,
The scene of his frolic and sport:

Honest Bob dropp'd a tear, and new sodded their grave,
Then sought for the love of his youth,
He found her, he woo'd her, her heart she soon gave,
For, he woo'd her with honour and truth.
Now twenty three years they have dwelt in yon spot,
Love always their guest, and contentment their lot,
Independence, truth, honour still dwell in their cot,
And freedom's the joy of his heart.

Lo! mark where they come the two sons of the brave
Honest Robert, march to the parade,
Around them Columbia her garland shall wave,
For Robert's sons are not afraid.
I stood in the ranks when he gave each a sword,
And mark'd with amazement the patriot's word,
With thine O COLUMBIA, his feelings accord
Tremble slaves, for thus freemen declare,

"My sons, lo your COUNTRY now calls for your aid,
Take *these* they are free from disgrace:
The sons of COLUMBIA must ne'er be afraid
Proud insulting tyrants to face,
With valour move forward, ne'er turn from the foe,
Before ye yield THESE let your bodies lie low,
The coward no joys, no comforts can know,
Of freedom unworthy to share:

"These swords, mark them well, this, your brave uncle bore,
I saw him at *Monmouth* expire:
That, through the whole contest your old father wore,
And with it some fame did acquire:
Go, go, my brave boys if your country call,
Defend your just rights, your freedom, your all,
Return independent or gloriously fall,
And your father will join you in death."

The father stood silent, each son kiss'd his blade,
And swore he would die or live free
The corps catch'd the word, the rock, hill and glade
Repeated the grand symphony.
Honest Robert then spoke, "COLUMBIA is free,
Independent, brave, just, and GOD doth decree,
Inslav'd by proud tyrants she never shall be,
This truth I'll seal with my last breath.

Lo! yonder he comes in the pride of his heart,
The *legion* to view in the field:
Each motion, the mem'ry of past joys impart,
He pants when their weapons they wield:
Know tyrants, *ten thousand brave Roberts* are here,
No dangers they'll shrink from, no perils they fear,
Their fam'd independence 'tis that they prize dear,
They'll hold it, yea grasp it, in death. W—T.